

# Motor Vehicle Safety Programs

Every employer whose workers drive on the job should have a comprehensive motor vehicle safety program. The program should provide clear policies, promote safe driving, and ensure that vehicles are maintained in a safe condition.

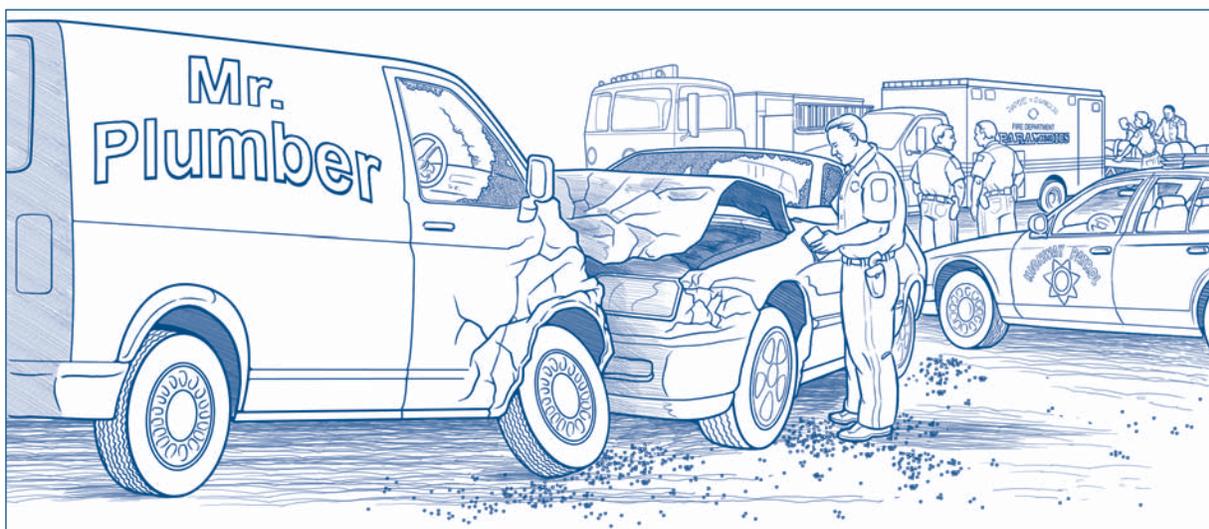
## Why Have a Motor Vehicle Safety Program?

According to federal government statistics:

- Every 5 seconds a motor vehicle accident occurs in the U.S.
- Every 10 seconds a motor vehicle injury occurs.
- Every 12 minutes a motor vehicle fatality occurs.

Many of these accidents involve workers on the job. Vehicle accidents are the *leading* cause of work-related deaths in the U.S. A preliminary report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics says that in 2007 there were 5,488 work fatalities in the U.S. Approximately 40% of these resulted from transportation incidents. In California in 2007 there were 407 work fatalities and 36% resulted from transportation incidents.

Any worker who drives on the job is at risk. Employers are also at risk because those whose workers are involved in vehicle accidents face serious potential liability. This is especially true if the individual(s) injured or killed are third parties (non-employees). Workers who are injured in job-related accidents are covered by workers' compensation and generally cannot sue their employers. However, damage awards from third-party lawsuits can potentially soar into the millions for a fatal accident. An effective safety program can greatly reduce these risks.



## What Factors Contribute to Accidents?

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According to government statistics, key factors contributing to vehicle accidents include:

- Exceeding the speed limit
- Driver fatigue
- Distracted driving
- Backing up unsafely
- Driving a poorly maintained vehicle.

When an accident occurs, injury is much more likely when drivers or passengers are not wearing seatbelts and when loads are not properly secured.

## What Are the Costs of Accidents?

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The greatest cost is the human pain and suffering, and lost quality of life that workers and their families can experience.

Overall, motor vehicle accidents cost U.S. employers \$60 billion a year. According to OSHA:

- Each accident with a non-fatal injury costs an employer an average of \$74,000.
- Each accident with a fatal injury can cost an employer \$500,000 (and higher).

On-the-job vehicle accidents are largely preventable, so employers can avoid these costs. A good vehicle safety program can help a lot. OSHA cites a survey of business executives by a major insurance company, in which a majority said employers save \$3 for every \$1 they invest in safety. [Source: OSHA's publication *Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes*, p.5.]

## What Can Employers Do?

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Employers are in an excellent position (and have a responsibility) to promote motor vehicle safety on the job. Developing an effective motor vehicle safety program is one of the best ways for employers to protect their employees who drive and to protect themselves from the high cost of accidents.

Although not specifically required, a vehicle safety program should be made part of an employer's Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP), a comprehensive safety program which Cal/OSHA requires most California employers to have.

Cal/OSHA's Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) standard (Title 8, California Code of Regulations, sections 1509 and 3203) says that employers need an effective written program to promote health and safety in the workplace. Copies must be made available to all workers.

## What Are the Elements of an Effective Vehicle Safety Program?

### 1. INVOLVE MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS

Assign a key member of the management team to help establish the vehicle safety program and enforce safety policies. This person should be fully accountable for the program.

Actively encourage participation and involvement from all levels of the organization. Workers and their union representatives (if any) should be consulted about all phases of the program as it is developed, and convinced to “buy in” to it. Ask workers to identify driving risks particular to their own jobs and to recommend appropriate solutions such as revised policies, procedures, and work schedules.

### 2. PREPARE WRITTEN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Develop a written statement emphasizing the employer's commitment to reducing vehicle-related deaths and injuries. Create a clear and comprehensive set of safety policies and communicate them to all employees.

Consider the following policies:

- Require workers to stop driving if they feel fatigue. Plan schedules to allow this. Accident risk has been shown to increase with hours of driving. Don't ask workers to drive beyond their normal working hours.
- Discourage distracted driving. For example, workers should avoid eating, drinking, reading, and applying makeup while driving. Don't require or allow workers to conduct company business on a cell phone while driving. (In California, according to the law, drivers must use “hands-free” headsets.)
- Require drivers to report problems or concerns with vehicles immediately.

#### Warning Signs of Fatigue

- Eyes that feel sore or heavy.
- Daydreaming.
- Continual yawning.
- Feeling stiff or cramped.
- Slower reaction times.
- Varying speed for no apparent reason.
- Rash decisions due to impatience.
- Wandering over the centerline or onto the road edge.

- Require drivers to maintain valid licenses for the types of vehicles they operate and to get required medical exams for commercial licenses when necessary. Check DMV history of workers who will be assigned to drive as a major part of their jobs.
- Develop work schedules that allow workers to obey speed limits.

### 3. ENCOURAGE SAFE DRIVING

- Provide continuous safety training to all drivers. Make sure that regular meetings are scheduled where safety challenges and problem-solving are discussed.
- Provide driver training for new hires. Many employers have found that new hires have more accidents than experienced workers.
- Teach workers strategies for recognizing and managing driver fatigue and in-vehicle distractions.
- Provide extra training to workers operating specialized motor vehicles or equipment.
- Emphasize the importance of using seat belts, and explain that it's mandatory.

#### Tips for Safe Driving

- Buckle up—always wear a seatbelt.
- Stay focused and awake.
- Don't use cell phones while driving.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Keep your cool—avoid aggressive behavior and road rage.
- Don't back up your vehicle unless there is good visibility. You may need a spotter and/or alarm.
- Watch out for pedestrians.
- Be aware of road conditions. Slow down on slick roads and in construction zones.
- Secure tools and equipment.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good condition.

—Adapted from Oregon OSHA

### 4. REPORT AND INVESTIGATE ALL INCIDENTS

- Develop a no-fault reporting system. This encourages workers to report near-misses and other problems as well as accidents.
- Review all incidents to determine their causes, patterns, trends, and whether or not they were preventable. Try to understand *root causes* (conditions that make driving mistakes more likely). Understanding what really happened, regardless of fault, can help reduce accidents in the future.

### 5. KEEP VEHICLES SAFE

- It is the employer's responsibility to establish a regular vehicle inspection/maintenance schedule. Conduct informal inspections daily and formal inspections on a regular basis.

- Encourage employees to report mechanical problems as soon as possible. (See the *Sample Vehicle Inspection Checklist* on the back page.)
- Provide vehicles that offer the highest possible level of protection. Vehicles should have working seat belts, adequate tire treads, provide rollover protection, and be in good mechanical condition.
- Provide necessary safety and emergency equipment in all vehicles, such as cones, triangles, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and snow chains. A camera to document incidents is also useful. Some employers supply an insurance form to diagram accidents, list witnesses, etc.
- Consider adopting a “one driver, one vehicle” strategy. This means that the same worker operates the same vehicle most of the time. He or she becomes familiar with it and may identify mechanical problems more easily.

## 6. EVALUATE YOUR SAFETY PROGRAM

- Periodically assess your progress, and use this information to improve your motor vehicle safety policies and procedures.

## Which Agencies Oversee Motor Vehicle Safety?

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- The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) develop and enforce vehicle safety standards.
- The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) licenses drivers at the appropriate level for the vehicles they operate.
- The California Highway Patrol (CHP) and local authorities have jurisdiction over driving violations, equipment violations, and any accident that occurs on a highway.
- Neither OSHA nor Cal/OSHA has a specific standard on motor vehicle safety.

## Sum Up

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Although employers cannot control roadway conditions, they can promote safe driving by keeping vehicles in safe condition and making sure that schedules do not cause driver fatigue. They should develop clear safety policies and provide safety information and training to workers. Many accidents are avoidable. If employers take the appropriate steps to protect and train their employees, work-related accidents can be significantly reduced. Developing a proactive vehicle safety program is one of the best ways to control costs and reduce injury to workers and others.

### A Note on Young Drivers

- Traffic accidents are the leading cause of fatalities for teenagers, both on and off the job.
- In California no worker under 18 may drive a motor vehicle on public streets as part of the job or work as an outside helper on a motor vehicle. (There are a few exceptions. For example, 17-year-olds may drive in very limited circumstances, but not as a major part of the job.)
- For young drivers (18 and up) assign driving-related tasks in an incremental fashion, beginning with limited driving responsibilities and ending with unrestricted assignments.
- For young drivers (18 and up) be particularly vigilant about enforcing safety belt use (adolescents and young adults are less likely than older adults to wear safety belts).

## RESOURCES

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### Cal/OSHA Consultation

[www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html)

Cal/OSHA is a state agency that enforces job safety and health standards by responding to complaints and accident reports and by conducting workplace inspections. Cal/OSHA's Consultation Service provides technical assistance on health and safety problems to employers and employees. Cal/OSHA Consultation has several vehicle-related publications on the web. Soon these will include a *Fleet Safety Program (FSP) Worksheet* and *Fleet Vehicle Safety Program Self-Assessment Checklist* which are currently in preparation. Employers can obtain assistance or learn more about Cal/OSHA Consultation services on the website or by calling toll-free 1-800-963-9424.

### National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Motor Vehicle Safety

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/motorvehicle/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/motorvehicle/)

NIOSH is the federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations to prevent work-related injury and illness nationwide. This NIOSH webpage offers links to *Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE)* case reports, other reports related to vehicle safety, and articles and factsheets with statistics and prevention information. NIOSH provides technical assistance on safety and health issues to employers, employees, and others. Call toll-free 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Motor Vehicle Safety

[www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety/](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety/)

OSHA promotes the safety and health of America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, and education. This OSHA webpage has information on motor vehicle safety, hazard recognition, possible solutions, and related resources. One important publication is *Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes*. Call toll-free 1-800-321-OSHA (1-800-321-6742).

## American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)—Transportation Practice Specialty

[www.asse.org/practicespecialties/transportation/](http://www.asse.org/practicespecialties/transportation/)

ASSE is the oldest and largest professional safety organization. This website offers safety checklists and safety articles of interest.

ASSE also offers for sale the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard ANSI/ASSE Z15.1 *Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations*, available from their “standards store” at [www.asse.org/cartpage.php?link=standards](http://www.asse.org/cartpage.php?link=standards). Go to the *Additional Standards* section to purchase a copy. This standard sets forth best practices for the safe operation of motor vehicles owned or operated by an organization.

## Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)

[www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov)

FMCSA focuses on reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. Many of their publications are available online, including the *ETA-A Motor Carriers’ Guide to Improving Highway Safety*, the *Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Guidebook*, and reports on various topics such as driver fatigue. The California Field Office number is 1-916-930-2760.

## National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

The NHTSA website provides access to the *National Driver Register*, a computerized database about drivers who have had their licenses revoked or suspended or who have been convicted of serious traffic violations. This site also includes statistical information, a collection of traffic safety factsheets, and many other publications. Call toll-free 1-888-327-4236.

## National Safety Council (NSC)

[www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

The NSC offers courses for safety professionals, instructors, supervisors, and drivers, with some leading to certificates. Its website has a free safety factsheet library with some on driving safety. It also has a Driver Safety page with general information, including state motor vehicle death statistics.

## Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS)

[www.trafficsafety.org](http://www.trafficsafety.org)

NETS is a public-private partnership that engages employers of all sizes and industry types in seeking, developing, and expanding best practices in traffic safety. Their website offers many statistics and factsheets for employers, including *The Economic Burden of Traffic Crashes on Employers and Work-Related Roadway Crashes: Challenges and Opportunities for Prevention*. Call 1-703-891-6005.

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## — SAMPLE VEHICLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST —

DATE:		MILEAGE:	
LICENSE PLATE # / VIN:		MILEAGE AT LAST SERVICE:	
ITEM CHECK THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN	OK	NOT OK	DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM
<b>REGISTRATION AND INSURANCE</b> Proper registration and proof of insurance?			
<b>HEADLIGHTS / TAIL LIGHTS / BRAKE LIGHTS</b> Do they work? Are they cracked?			
<b>HORN</b> Working?			
<b>BRAKES</b> Will emergency brake hold? Other problems?			
<b>WINDSHIELD WIPERS</b> Wipers and rear wipers in good condition?			
<b>WINDSHIELD</b> Free from cracks that impair vision?			
<b>TIRES</b> Proper inflation? At least 1mm of tread?			
<b>EXHAUST SYSTEM</b> No leaks, noise, or smoke?			
<b>REAR VIEW MIRROR</b> Working? Side mirrors (if applicable)?			
<b>DOORS AND WINDOWS</b> Open and close freely? No cracked glass?			
<b>FUEL TANK</b> Free from leaks? Gas cap OK?			
<b>SEAT BELTS</b> One for each seat? In good working order?			
<b>ALL FLUIDS</b> Fluids filled to correct level?			
<b>BABY / CHILD SEAT (if applicable)</b> Installed and secured properly?			
<b>EMERGENCY AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT</b> Cones / extinguisher / first aid kit / water / snow chains / phone / camera to document accidents			